

**FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
WINTER 2017 FUNDING CYCLE
Decision Notice and Response to Public Comment**

Prepared by
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
February 15, 2017

Proposal and Final Action

Members of the Future Fisheries Review Panel submitted funding recommendations for 15 proposed projects from the Winter 2017 funding cycle of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program (FFIP) to the Montana Fish & Wildlife Commission (Commission) for final approval. The Future Fisheries Review Panel is an independent board appointed by the governor (87-1-273, MCA). As a final action, the Commission adopted all of the funding recommendations, as submitted by the Future Fisheries Review Panel, at their public telephone meeting held in Helena on February 15, 2017.

The FFIP was established in 1995 to establish and implement a statewide voluntary program that promotes fishery habitats and spawning areas for the rivers, streams, and lakes of Montana's fisheries in order to enhance future fisheries through natural reproduction (87-1-272, MCA).

Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)

MEPA requires Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to assess the potential consequences of the proposed action for the human and natural environment. Environmental Assessments (EA's) were prepared and released by FWP on January 13, 2017 for ten individual proposed projects associated with the Winter 2017 Future Fisheries funding cycle. The 30-day public comment period ended February 12, 2017. These proposed projects included:

1. Big Otter Creek riparian protection and improvement (002-2017)
2. East Fork Bitterroot River riparian fencing and revegetation (003-2017)
3. Jack Creek riparian restoration (006-2017)
4. Marshall Creek fish passage (008-2017)
5. Mill Creek fish ladder (009-2017)
6. Moore's Creek channel and riparian restoration (010-2017)
7. Nevada Creek channel restoration (011-2017)
8. Racetrack Creek Johnson diversion replacement (014-2017)
9. Sauerkraut Creek instream flow lease (015-2017)
10. Williams Creek riparian fencing (018-2017)

The remaining 5 projects funded by Commission approval fell either under a categorical exclusion (defined under ARM 12.2.454), the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), or ongoing/pending Environmental Assessment processes by the project applicants.

Projects that fall under a categorical exclusion (riparian fencing):

1. Fresno Reservoir habitat enhancement (004-2017)

Projects that fall under NEPA:

2. Bender Creek fish barrier (001-2017)
3. North Fork Cottonwood Creek fish passage (013-2017)

Projects with an EA previously completed or in process by applicant:

4. Ninemile Creek channel restoration (012-2017)
5. Sevenmile Creek fish passage (016-2017)

Summary of Public Comment


The following is a summary of comments received from the three drafted EA's, followed by the responses from FWP.

- Sauerkraut Creek instream flow lease (015-2017)
 - Comment 1: "Looks like a good project and it would be a shame not to continue it."
 - Response: No response necessary.
- Williams Creek riparian fencing (018-2017)
 - Comment 1: "The Williams Creek Project, looks like a great use of the Future Fisheries money."
 - Response: No response necessary.

Decision Notice

The public comment period closed on the three projects (above), and the comments indicated general support. Based on the EAs' disclosures and analyses of potential impacts, FWP concludes that the proposed actions will not result in any significant impacts. For these three projects, FWP will adopt the draft EA as the final EA and proceed with the projects as planned. Copies of the final EA's are available upon request.

Thank you for your interest,



Bruce Rich
Habitat Bureau Chief, Fisheries Division
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks